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THE DARK TOWER THE GUNSLINGER



SHEEMIE'S TALE

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"I'd already helped them to snap one Beam and I was cutting centuries off their work on Shardik's Beam. And when Shardik's Beam snaps, lady and gentlemen, Gan's can only last a little while. And when Gan's Beam also snaps, the Dark Tower will fall, creation will end, and the very Eye of Existence will turn blind."

--The Dark Tower



I was always a-fear'd of
prison...even a-fore I
got trapped in the Devar-
Toi in Thunderclap.



Most folks only remember the
past. But me, I sometimes
remember the future too.



And my future 'us
always wrapped
in barbed wire.



tsobt
tsobt



When I was a bah-bo, Barkie
threw me into the sheriff's
lockup. I was so a-scared
I peed myself and cried.



You chill your buns till
you learn some
respect!

No sai,
please! I'll
be good, so
I will!

But Sheriff's prison
was little, so it was.

The Devar-Toi
is big-big.

In End-World talk, Devar-Toi means Big Prison, and it's the only thing here in the dark land of Thunderclap.

There's a whole town inside "the Devar," and there ain't no bars on the windy-ohs.

I s'pose that's why some folks pretend they ain't in prison.



Eat your ice cream, big guy.



Remember what I told you, Sheemie son of Stanley.



All hail the Crimson King.



My friend Ted says a prison don't need bars on the windy-ohs if the prisoners got bars in their minds.

That's why I'm callin' to you, Roland. Cause folks here ain't gonna break out on their own.



*All us prisoners
in the Devar are
Breakers.*



*We got precogs here, 'n
postcogs, 'n telepaths,
'n proggers.*

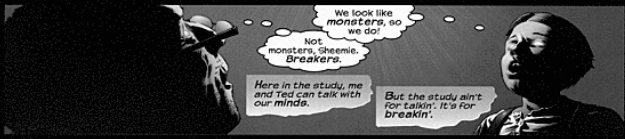


*The guards, they don't
ask us to do nothin' 'cept
sit in the Study and let
our minds rise.*



*Problem is we do real bad
things when our minds rise.
Even me, with my pea-brain.*





We look like
monsters, so
we do!

Not
monsters, **Gheemie**.
Breakers.

Here in the study, me
and Ted can talk with
our minds.

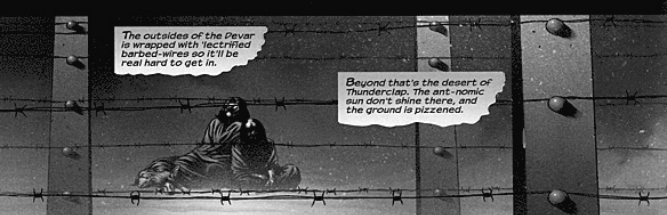
But the study ain't
for talkin'. It's for
breakin'.



Folks here say that to Break is
divine. Like scratchin' a scratch
you've had all yer life, but didn't
ken you could reach.

But Breakin' ain't good,
no matter how good it
feels. Breakin' is like
killin' the world, a little
bit at a time.

That's why we need you
to come here, Roland.
We need you to rescue
us from our-selves.



The outsides of the Pevar is wrapped with 'lectrified barbed-wires so it'll be real hard to get in.

Beyond that's the desert of Thunderclap. The ant-nomic sun don't shine there, and the ground is pizzened.



Folks here is always a-gettin' ear-styke, or pimples, or the eating sickness.

But it's worse for the Rods, who live outside the wires. They ain't human n'more.



The guards say that End-Times is comin', but in Thunderclap, End-Times already came.



Does that mean I'm dead? I can't rightly say.



We don't get shoes in the Pevar. Just slippers.

It's real hard to run away in slippers, 'specially in the desert.

PISH

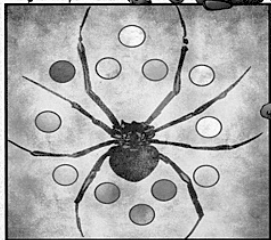
PISH



My friend Dani's real smart. She told me how this strange place came to be.

You know who made the Devar, Sheemie?

The guards?



She said that the Devar was made by a spider. Not a little spider like the ones I used to squish, but a **monster spider**, like the one that tried to trap you when you was leavin' Hambry.

Where did the Big Spider come from?

Before the world was made, everything was a big soup, called the Prim. The spider and his family lived there.

They ate the soup?



No, silly. When the Park Tower spun the universe out of the Prim, the Spider King's family was locked out of creation. They were left to starve.

Now the Red King wants to destroy the Park Tower so that he and his family can feast on the wreckage.





I told Dani that I saved my friend Roland from a spider king once, but she thought I was dreamin'. Then she got real mad.



Sheemie!
The Crimson King
is immortal and
all-powerful!



We're making
us do his dirty
work for him! We're
Breakers.

I don't
understand.



"The Breakers are scratching
away at the *Beams* that hold
the *Park Tower* in place."

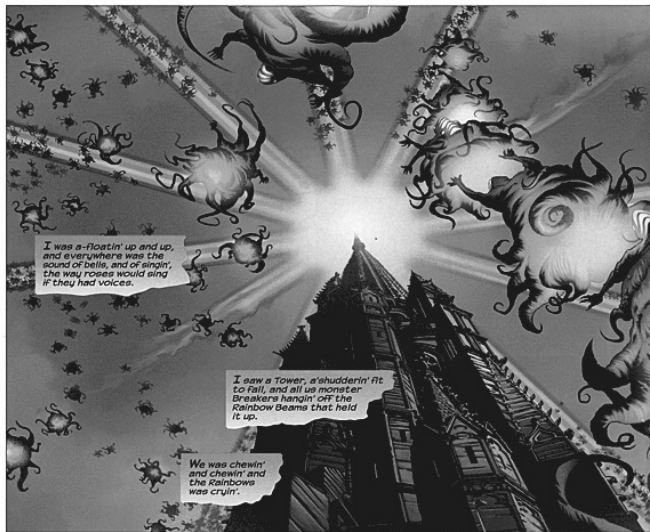
"It's rude to
scratch your
Beam."



Dani said I should go to
the study and look with
the eyes inside my head.
Then I'd understand.



So I did what
Dani said.



*I was a-floatin' up and up,
and everywhere was the
sound of bells, and of singin',
the way roses would sing
if they had voices.*

*I saw a Tower, a'shudderin' fit
to fall, and all us monster
Breakers hangin' off the
Rainbow Beams that held
it up.*

*We was chewin'
and chewin' and the Rainbows
was cryin'.*

*Then one Rainbow
became a boy.*



*I recognized the Beam
boy. In a dream I had
once, he saved my life.*



But I knew I'd have to do
somethin' else real quiet
like, somethin' that
looked like Breakin'.



Else the guards 'ud
shoot me, like the ones
that shot piggy.



So I thought real
hard. What could
I do?

And I thought,
I could tell a
story!

But then I thought, Sheemie!
You bugwit! What kind of
story can you tell?



And I thought,
I can tell my
story.

SHEEMIE'S TALE

And I thought I'd tell it to you,
Roland. 'Cause if my thoughts
can travel far enough, you'll
think of your old pal Sheemie
and you'll come and rescue me.

AAAAHHHHHHH!

I don't remember
bein' born, though
folks say it hurts
real bad.

Push harder,
Dolores!

She *can't*,
sai Thorin! She's
done for!

Wish I could
say Dolores gave
her life birthin' a
beautiful boy.

What do ya
think's wrong with
him, Coral?

Don't know,
Pettie, but I
need a drink.

My ma was Dolores
Sheemer. She died
bringin' me into
the world.

I think Stanley the
Barkeep was my pa,
but I ain't sure.

Mama was a gilly-girl at
the Travellers' Rest in
Hamby, and she kissed
lots of men in the shack
behind the saloon.

Stanley said I was a Reaptime
mooncalf, so maybe my real pa
was the Pernon Moon of Reap.
Sure would explain a lot.



I wasn't ever like other babbies, but after my mama died, they kept me at the Rest.



When I got big, sai Thorin set me to collectin' glasses. Said it would help me earn my keep.

But just afore you come to Hambry, things turned sour at the Rest.

I started havin' scary dreams about a box...



And 'bout a pink ball with a starin' red eye in its center.

Bad men came to town. They called their selves Big Coffin Hunters. Everybody seemed to think they brought hope to Hambry, but I kenneed the truth.



They was as mean as drunks on Reap Night.



Roland, when you and Bert and Alain came to town, I thought you was like knights in a fairy story. Even a-fore you said it, I kened in my heart that you was gunslingers.

You said your daddies sent you to Hambry to catch that pink ball with an eye in it, but not even your daddies kened the truth.

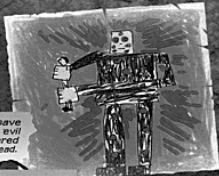
That eye ate death, and it had come to feast in Hambry.

Lookin' back, I shoulda kened that the ball wanted you, Roland. All the rest was just pretend.



It wanted to trap your spirit-man in its pink storm world, 'cause it knew you was the only one who could stop its master's plans.

I wanted to save you from that evil eye, so I follered you back to Gilead.



Long the way I got trapped by a metal-bal, in a Pogan. I thought he was a-gonna kill me, but he didn't.

Instead he made my inside eyes real strong, and gave me the 'bilty to teleport.

That meant my pea-brain could move me faster than my feet. I thunked about you and Bert and Alain, and there I was, a-rustin' in the bushes.

But Lady Fate's a jokester. She gives a little, only to take it all back again.



Die, wolf!



What for you shootin' Sheemie? Was I bad...?



All accidental, Bert shot me. It hurt awful, but I cheated Mr. Peath.



Stead of goin' into the shadow lands, I followed you into that pink eyeball, where you was a prisoner.

No more pain!



Wasn't till later I found out that badster I saved you from was the Spider King hieself.



Wizard!
Fetch me that
half-wit! He's a
Breaker!



Lemme
go!

I'm real glad you 'escaped.
But meetin' the Spider
King was the beginning
of the end for me.



I got free for a
little while, but
it didn't last
real long.

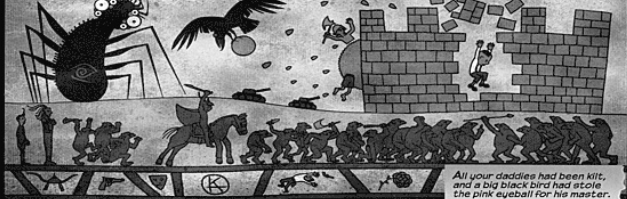


AAAAHH!
FALLING!

I followed you, so I did.
But in Gilead, things
had got real bad.



ISE DIXIT VERMICULUS REX: GILEAD DELENDA EST



All your daddies had been kilt,
and a big black bird had stole
the pink eyeball for his master.

We had to run
or die.

But Roland, you
said we weren't
runnin' away.

We were gonna follow
a rainbow to the Dark
Tower itself.

We'd save the
world and be
heroes!

Thank you,
Randolph. The
Red King will pay
you well for this
little Breaker!

But that was 'afore
I knew that bugwits
can't be heroes.

And that was afore I learned
that Bert and Alain was dead,
and that life don't have
happy endings much. Not
like in fairy stories.





You
takin' me to
Na'ar?

No, little
half-wit. I am
taking you to
End-World.



Here you shall
join our retinue
of Breakers.



The bird-man made
me all sorts of
promises.

After a
lifetime of being
the butt of jokes,
you will finally receive
the respect that
is your due.

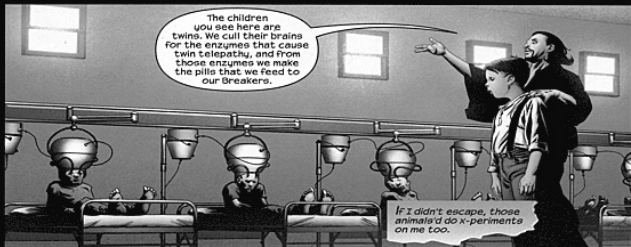
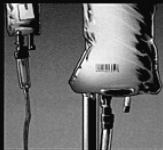


But even then,
I kened I had
to 'escape.



The bird-man kept talkin' and talkin' but I knowed the truth.

Inside his hospital, all the doctors was animals and all the sick folks was bah-bos.



If I didn't escape, those animals'd do x-periments on me too.



These pills will
make you stronger
than you can imagine.
You will become a
Breaker for our Lord
and Master, the
Crimson K--



NO MORE
PAIN!





THE ORIGINS OF SHEEMIE'S TALE

Every long and complex narrative inevitably contains many unfinished stories. I like to think of these unfinished stories as seed tales. Think of an apple tree, heavy with fruit. Each apple on that tree is separate and complete—a delight to apple lovers everywhere. But each apple is also part of a larger entity, namely, the tree. Although the apple

is a small part of the apple tree, the seeds at its core have the potential to grow into new trees. So it is with stories. If we think of the apple tree as Mid-World, then the apples—the fruit of the tree—are all of the Mid-World tales we have come to love. Yet each of these tales also contains little unfinished stories, which can, if nurtured, grow into new and exciting adventures.

When he created the Dark Tower universe, Stephen King didn't just sow a single tree, he planted a whole orchard. Inevitably then, that Mid-World orchard contains hundreds—perhaps even thousands—of seed tales. As the person responsible for plotting the Dark Tower comics, I have the pleasure of collecting these seeds and letting them germinate. I nurture these stories as best as I can, encouraging them to grow roots, branches, and fruit of their own.

Sheemie's Tale, the first installment of which you hold in your hands, grew out of several of these seed tales. I first started collecting Sheemie's seed stories when I was plotting *The Gunslinger Born*, the first of our Dark Tower graphic novels. In our story, as in Stephen King's novel, *Wizard and Glass*, Sheemie was the slow but sweet tavern boy who worked at the Travellers' Rest. After he was



SHEEMIE IS SAVED BY THE KA—TET: GUNSLINGER BORN
© ART BY JAE LEE AND RICHARD ISANOVE



THE BURNING OF SUSAN GUNGLER BORN
7. ART BY JAE LEE AND RICHARD ISANOVE

saved from the Big Coffin Hunters by Roland's ka-mate, Cuthbert Allgood, Sheemie swore allegiance to Roland's ka-tet, and helped our friends defeat Farson's forces. (With Roland's lover Susan Delgado, Sheemie secretly collected the gunpowder-filled firecrackers which Alain and Cuthbert used to blow up the brush at the mouth of Eyebolt Canyon, trapping Farson's forces in the canyon's monster-filled thimny.)

Although Sheemie disappeared from the narrative soon after Susan was burned on a Charyou Tree fire, Stephen King provided us with a few intriguing hints about Sheemie's fate. We were told that after Susan's death, Sheemie and his mule Capi found their way through the wild lands between Mejis and Gilead, eventually joining Roland and his friends in their home city. Later, when

Roland's tet wandered through Mid-World searching for the Dark Tower, Sheemie accompanied them on their quest, acting as a kind of squire. (As those of you who've read the earlier Dark Tower comics know, these story seeds eventually took root in *The Long Road Home*, *Treachery*, *The Fall of Gilead*, and *The Battle of Jericho Hill*.)

Stephen King returned to Sheemie's story in *The Dark Tower*, Book VII of the Dark Tower saga. Although hundreds of years had passed in Mid-World since Roland's Hambry adventures, when we meet Sheemie again he has only aged a few decades. His psychic abilities—which were barely hinted at in *Wizard and Glass*—have also grown exponentially stronger. How has this happened? Like Roland, Sheemie has spent many decades outside of Mid-World's time stream. Only in Sheemie's case, this charmed existence was not the consequence of his quest for the Dark Tower, but was the result of his involuntary participation in the Crimson King's scheme to destroy the multiverse.

For many years, Sheemie has been incarcerated in the Devar-Toi (translated as "Big Prison") located in Thunderclap, the first region



SHEEMIE RIDES TO ROLAND'S RESCUE. LONG ROAD HOME
4. ART BY JAE LEE AND RICHARD ISANOVE

of End-World. All of the prisoners in the Devar-Toi are Breakers, or powerful psychics, who are being forced by the Crimson King's henchmen into using their psychic powers to erode the Beams that hold the Dark Tower in place. Although the Devar is surrounded by barbed wire and is patrolled by armed guards (many of whom are either taheen or can-toi—creatures with the bodies of men and the heads of beasts), the Devar itself is quite a comfortable place. As we show in our comics, the Devar contains an old-fashioned American town and is illuminated by an artificial sun. (Elsewhere in Thunderclap, it is always dark.) Despite the frequent infections that the inmates suffer from (after all, the Devar is located in a poisoned wasteland), most of the Breakers are quite happy. Outcast in their home worlds because of their strange abilities and their frequent physical abnormalities, most of Sheemie's fellow psychics don't mind the fact that



SHEEMIE EXPERIMENTED ON BY THE SCARY MAN. LONG ROAD HOME
2. ART BY JAE LEE AND RICHARD ISANOVE



DEVAR-TOI SHEEMIE'S TALE 1. ART BY RICHARD ISANOVE



BREAKING BEAMS SHEEMIE'S TALE 1 ART BY RICHARD ISANOVE

they have been tasked with bringing about the collapse of the universe. Although their consciences might experience the occasional twinge, their accommodations are classy, their food is great, and the sim sex available to them is almost as good as the real thing. Hence, they are willing to do what they must to remain in their safe and protected environment. Only Sheemie, his friends Ted Brautigan, Dinky Earnshaw, Dani Rostov, and a few others, refuse to make peace with the lives that the Crimson King has given them. Instead they are waiting for our gunslinger—Roland Deschain—to destroy the Devar and scupper the Crimson King's plans.

When we meet Sheemie in *The Dark Tower*, he is about thirty-five years old and he has not spoken for a long, long time. For many years, he and his friends have been awaiting Roland's arrival, gathering weapons for him and making audiotapes, which explain the layout and the

history of the Devar. Although we learn how many of the other Breakers arrived in Thunderclap, the means by which Sheemie landed in the Crimson King's trap remains a mystery. This mystery had always intrigued me, and was something I was eager to explore. Hence, when Stephen King gave a thumbs-up to the proposal for *Sheemie's Tale*, I was very happy.

As fans of *Wizard and Glass* will attest, Sheemie is intellectually slow, but his big heart and his innate grasp of moral rightness makes him an intriguing character. Because of this I thought that the story of Sheemie's arrival in the Devar, and of his complex emotional reaction to what was happening there, could potentially make a very interesting story. At first I wanted the tale to be told in the third person, but Richard Isanove—the artist for our story—thought that the tale would have more emotional weight if it was told by Sheemie himself. Though the

task was daunting, I agreed with Richard's assessment. Difficult as it would be, I wanted to show how Sheemie—using his limited intellectual abilities—could grapple with such complicated and morally difficult issues. What connections would he make between his own life experiences and the lives of the twins sacrificed so that the Breakers could become more powerful? How would he interpret the task he has been given, of destroying the multiverse? (And by the way, the Beam Boy that Sheemie befriends in our story comes from The Dark Tower as well. After teleporting Roland and his ka-mates to a safe haven, Sheemie has a seizure, and during that seizure he has a vision of the Beam Boy who has been beaten and bruised by the actions of the Breakers.)

The more I worked with Sheemie—and the more I tried to speak in his voice—the more respect I had for him, both as a character, and as an example of what human beings can strive for. As so frequently

happens in Stephen King's tales, it is Sheemie—the weak boy who has so many obstacles to overcome in his life—who proves to be a true hero.

I hope you enjoy *Sheemie's Tale*. As always, it was a great honor and pleasure to work with Stephen King's complex and fascinating universe.

Long days and pleasant nights.

Robin Furth



THE BEAM BOY, BATTLE OF JERICO HILL I ART BY JAE LEE AND RICHARD ISANOVE

ART EVOLUTION BY RICHARD ISANOVE



For this cover, I wanted to find a way to represent the core theme of the story: little Sheemie helpless, at the mercy of powers much bigger than him. I guess, with that in mind, the result you see here is pretty literal. Because there is as much pathos as comedy within the character, I opted for a very dramatic layout drawn in a cartoonish style.



My son Mathieu was the right age for the character so we pulled his hair back, precariously balanced him on a chair while my daughter held his feet in the air and twisted him around until I got the correct pose. He's laughing there, but after a dozen falls, he didn't think it was that funny anymore. For some reason he's very proud to be the model for a hydrocephalic simpleton with a triple harelip.

That's the finished sketch which I send to my excellent editors for approval. The design for the Breakers had evolved by the time I drew them inside the book, but the basic idea stayed the same. This one works because it's by itself, but once they started piling up on the page, you couldn't tell what was going on anymore. I also later switched them from purple to green to differentiate them from the other tentacular monsters Sheemie meets in issue 2.



I usually ink directly on the computer but I wanted to try using a thinner, more delicate line. So, I enlarged and printed out the sketch then traced and cleaned it up with a regular pencil on paper. It's become so rare for me to draw on paper, outside of conventions, that I jump at any excuse to get back to the basics.



I scanned the drawing and blacked out the darkest areas to see what it would look like to contrast the delicate gray line with those heavy dark masses. The composition falls apart a bit, but I had a pretty clear idea of what I was going to do with the colors so I figured it'd all come together in the end.



Of course, by the time it was colored with special effects, glows and line art knockouts, it didn't really matter how delicate the line was anymore. I probably could have saved myself an afternoon of work by simply cleaning up the original sketch but at least, for once, I had some original pencils. Since my son also helped me by drawing Sheemie's kid's drawings in the flashback sequence, I gave him the piece to hang in his bedroom. I think he hopes it might be worth something when I die.

NEXT:





Sheemie Ruiz is a half-wit with the power to heal the world. After helping Roland Deschain and his original ka-tet escape the little town of Hambry, Sheemie entered the evil crystal known as Merlin's Grapefruit and saved Roland from its deadly possession. But his fidelity could not stem the tide of war, and Gilead, the last city of light, fell to the Crimson King. Sheemie was lost.

And then he was found. The Man in Black stole him out of the time of Mid-World and has brought him to a strange place to do the Crimson King's bidding. This is the story never told, the tale absent from Roland's constant memories.

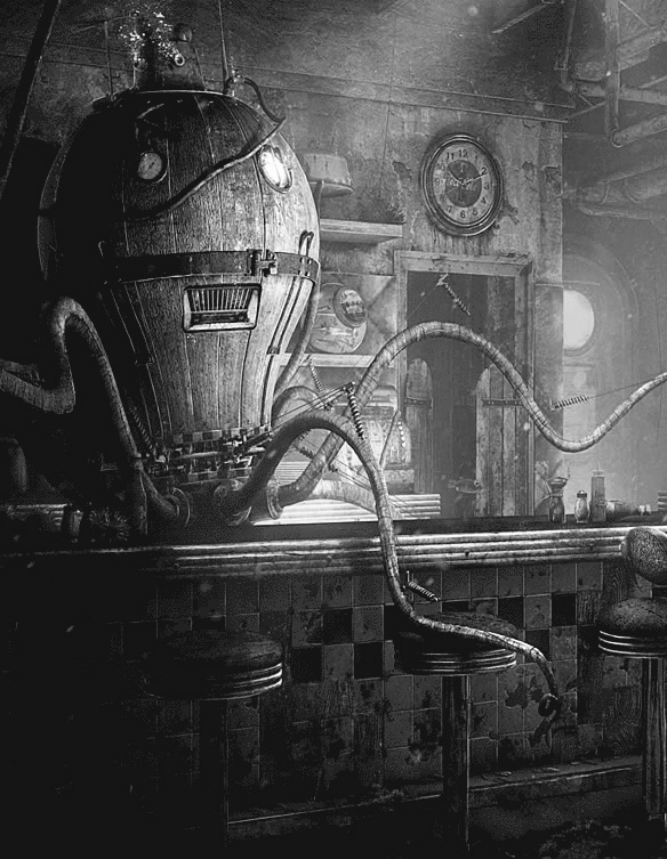
This is Sheemie's Tale.

From the renowned creative team of Robin Furth and Richard Isanove comes the final chapter in the Dark Tower saga. With fantasy, horror, revenge, drama and a dash of the Old West, such a story could only come from storytelling legend Stephen King.

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